



Projet Erasmus+ Namur - Marsala

" Patrimonia "



A la découverte du patrimoine historique, architectural et culturel

# « Terra Nova » Citadel of Namur



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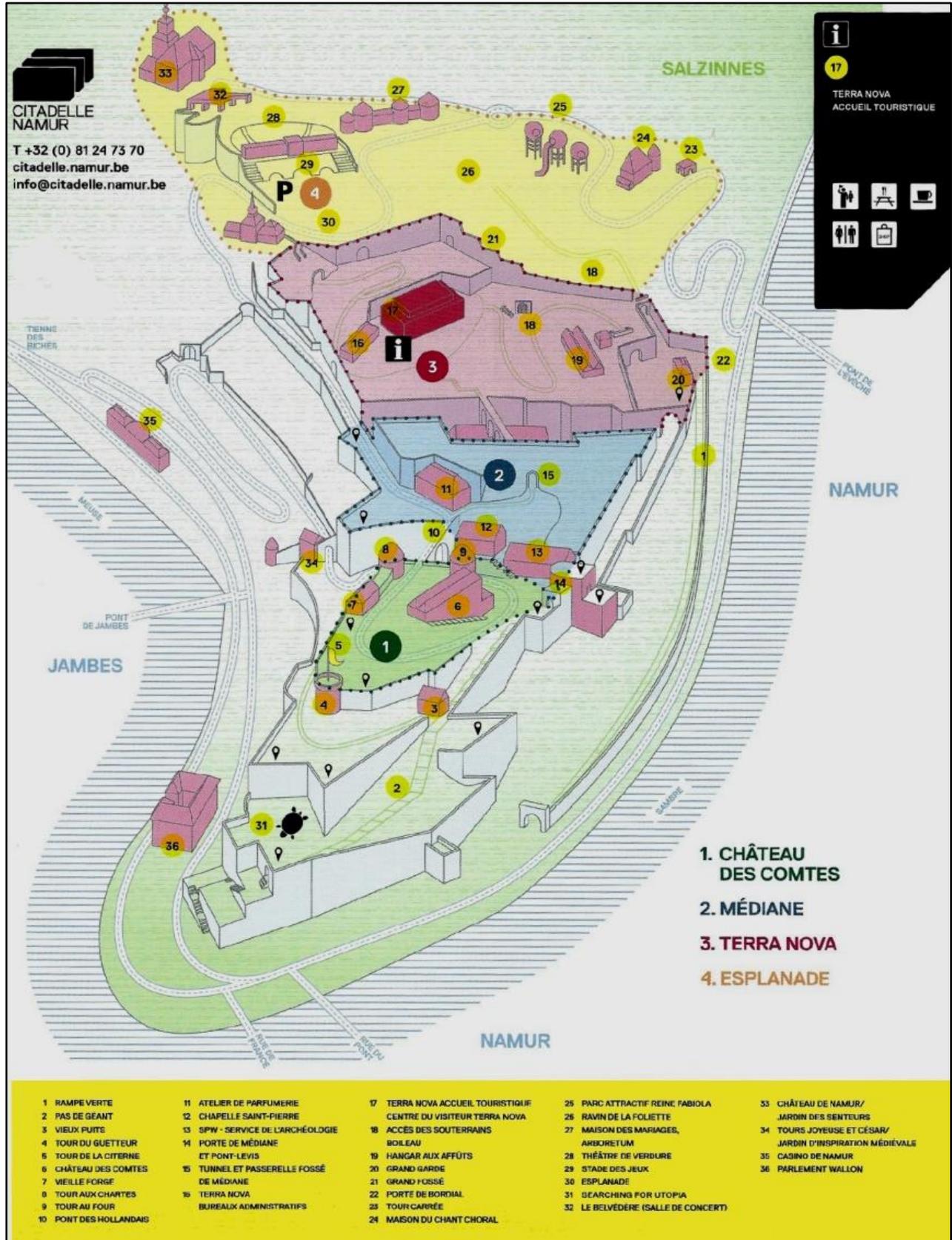
# ABSTRACT

## General presentation

*Since 1996, the entire Citadel of Namur is classified the exceptional heritage of Wallonia*



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## *The Citadel of Namur along the time ...*

Although the first traces of a fortification on the « Champeau » hill are dating from the 3rd century, it is only in the 13th century that a fortified residence is erected on the rocky spur. Step by step, this residence will turn into a real castle, the « Château des Comtes » (“Counts’ Castle”). This part is today called: the « **medieval** » stratum

In 1421, following the purchase of the title and the land by Philippe le Bon, Duke of Burgundy, the county of Namur is integrated into a larger whole.

Although the title of Count of Namur remains for a long time, it is only a title carried by sovereigns who give up life in the castle. The castle thus gradually lost its residential function to assume an increasingly important military function.

The successive overlords (see family tree) no longer reside in Namur but care for the defence of the capital city. At the end of the 15th century, with the appearance of powder and the evolution of armament, the castle must review its defence methods. A first line of advanced and casemated defence was built towards the « Champeau » plain.

From this moment, the fortress of Namur will be called the “Citadel”.

This part is now called the « **Median** »

Over the centuries, defence efforts have been directed to the heights of the hill towards the weak points of the Citadel: the « Foliette » ravine which allows the attackers to approach under cover via a gentle slope and the elevation difference that favours the attacker, always arriving from the top.

From 1648 to 1713, war raged between Spain, the United Provinces, England and France. As a strategic position on the Meuse River, the citadel of Namur is the object of all lusts.

As early as 1631, the French attempts threatened Namur and a new fortification campaign, from 1631 to 1675, was led by the Spanish. The city walls are reinforced and a new defence part is erected in front of Médiante. It is a double bastioned line now called « **Terra Nova** ». It is delimited at its highest point by a large horned structure\* flanked by two half-bastions\* while a complete bastion protects the Sambre River side.

From this period, the ditch and the shape of the fortifications can still be observed.

In 1692, the stronghold underwent a new assault, led by Louis XIV accompanied by his lieutenant-general Vauban. It remained in the hands of the French for three years.

During this occupation period, Vauban was entrusted with rebuilding and strengthening the stronghold. He built several advanced works and bomb-proof buildings, while considerably increasing the underground network.

But his work was stopped by a new siege in 1695, that of William III of Orange and Maximilian-Emmanuel of Bavaria. The destruction linked to the siege then led to a new rebuilding campaign. The defence of the city was strengthened again and several works were added on the heights of the Champeau hill. New underground tunnels are also being dug.

\* See the Glossary

In 1701, the Spanish Succession War upset again this chessboard.

Namur came thus back under the authority of Louis XIV, then in 1711, was offered to the Habsburg of Austria in gratitude for their support. The sovereignty of the Netherlands is attributed to Marie-Thérèse of Austria. However, it was forced by the "Treaty of the Barrier" to leave a Dutch garrison at the Citadel of Namur.

Louis XV who challenged his sovereignty took the city of Namur in 1746. During this episode, half the dungeon of the Counts' Castle disappeared in the explosion of a powder keg. After two years of French occupation, the Belgians retrieved with joy Marie-Thérèse's reign. Upon her death, her son Joseph II inherited the region but no longer wanted obligations related to the « Treaty of the Barrier » and ordered the dismantling of the stronghold. The Dutch garrisons were forced to leave. During this dismantling, some walls of Terra Nova and Médiante have been breached.

In 1789, the Austrians were driven off by insurgents of the Republic of the United Belgian States, who will summarily repair the citadel.

In 1790, Leopold II of Austria took over his possessions and continued the rebuilding of the stronghold until 1794 when the French were once again masters of our region, until 1815 and the Battle of Waterloo.

In 1804, Napoleon I ordered the disarmament of the citadel of Namur which he would have called « Europe's anthill ».

After Waterloo, the Congress of Vienna (1815) wanted to prevent France from egressing its borders and our region became an integrated buffer zone in the United Kingdom of the Netherlands led by William of Orange. In order to fulfill this task, the citadel must be re-armed. Between 1816 and 1825, it was completely rebuilt and underwent its last great fortification campaign. Today, nearly 90% of the visible fortifications date from this period. The Dutch works followed roughly the layout of the old defensive lines.

Following the uprising of 1830, the Kingdom of Belgium was born.

The Belgian army began some work in the citadel, such as the building of a gun carriage shed and, much later, the adding of a floor to the former Dutch barracks.

At the end of the 19th century, the building of nine concrete forts around Namur made the Citadel useless as a means of direct protection. In 1891, a part of the citadel was demilitarized. The « Champeau » plain is partially transformed into a recreation and walking centre. A fourth stratum, called the « ***Esplanade*** », is developing. A hotel is built on the heights as well as a playground and an open-air theatre. They allow the organization of games and sports events. Some walls overlooking the city are lowered to admire the view.

Access to the site is facilitated by two scenic roads, a tram line and the installation of a funicular.

Only the « Median » and « Terra Nova » parts retain a military function.

The Citadel nevertheless played a last military role during WWII as a command post for the Fortified Position of Namur and continued to house the Para-Commandos Regiment until 1977.



